

DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

Site Address: Sonning Court, Thames Street, Sonning, Reading RG4 6UR

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1. Introduction

This statement supports a Householder application for extensions and alterations at Sonning Court, located within the Sonning Conservation Area.

The proposal seeks to rationalise the rear of the dwelling through modest, high-quality design that respects its architectural character and setting, following previous consents including F/2011/0837, F/2012/1518, and F/2013/2074.

2. Design

1.1 Description of the Existing House

Sonning Court is a substantial detached dwelling of classical form, set within extensive landscaped grounds with mature planting. It features white-painted render, timber cladding, timber sash windows, and a mix of pitched and flat roofs. The house is well screened from Thames Street.

1.2 Proposed Works

- **Lower Ground Floor:** Extend the existing lower ground floor room (approved under F/2011/0837) by partially infilling the lightwell and adjusting external steps.
- **Ground Floor:** Remove the existing rear extension (approved under F/2013/2074) and conservatory; construct a new single-storey rear extension with Crittall-style glazing and large-format sliding doors.
- **First Floor:** Infill two existing recesses in the rear elevation to form modest extensions.
- **Fenestration & Materials:** Replace painted timber sash windows with Crittall-style metal windows in revised locations, render and paint the rear elevation white.
- **Roof Terrace:** The roof of the new ground floor extension will form a first-floor terrace with glass balustrade, consistent with the arrangement approved under F/2011/0837 that also included a roof terrace with a glass balustrade.

These changes simplify and unify the rear elevation, improving functionality of the house, increasing the ability to enjoy the view of the garden and beyond as well as improving access to the garden.

1.3 Access

No access alterations are proposed. Existing vehicular and pedestrian arrangements from Thames Street remain unchanged.

3. Principle of Development

The site lies within the Sonning settlement boundary where residential extensions are acceptable in principle under Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3. The proposed works are proportionate and deliver visual and functional improvements without harming heritage or amenity.

4. Impact on the Character of the Area

The works are confined to the rear elevation, replacing piecemeal additions with a coherent and balanced composition. The restrained palette of white render and slender grey metal glazing complements the classical form of the existing dwelling.

The proposals respect the character and appearance of the Sonning Conservation Area and will not be visible from public viewpoints.

5. Impact on Neighbours

Loss of Light / Overlooking / Overbearing:

Sonning Court is separated from neighbouring dwellings by over 50 metres and extensive landscaping. The scale and height of the extensions are modest, with no overlooking or overbearing impacts. The new terrace repeats an arrangement already approved, ensuring no change in privacy conditions.

6. Impact on Private Rear Amenity Space

The proposed extensions occupy a small part of the generous garden, preserving ample amenity space. The layout enhances the relationship between interior and exterior spaces.

7. Highway Issues

The proposal maintains existing parking and access. The gated driveway and on-site parking remain unaffected. No impact on highway safety.

8. Impact on Flooding

Although part of the site lies within Flood Zone 2, the proposed works are on raised ground and do not increase flood risk. The micro-pump and soakaway systems from the 2011 consent remain operational.

The scheme complies with MDD Policies CC09 (Development & Flood Risk) and CC10 (Sustainable Drainage).

9. Heritage Impact Summary

Sonning Court is located in the Sonning Conservation Area, characterised by large detached dwellings in landscaped settings.

The proposed works are confined to the rear and not visible from the public realm. The removal of existing incongruous additions and the introduction of a unified, well-proportioned extension enhance the dwelling's architectural integrity.

The design preserves the area's special character in line with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and NPPF Section 16.

10. Conclusion

The proposals represent a sensitive and well-considered evolution of Sonning Court. The works enhance the property's appearance, function, and relationship with its surroundings without harm to neighbours, flood risk, or heritage value.

The development complies with the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010), MDD Local Plan (2014), Borough Design Guide SPD (2012), and the Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal (2017).

Appendix A: Policy Compliance Matrix

Policy / Guidance	Requirement	Proposal Response	Compliance
Core Strategy CP1	High-quality, sustainable design.	Rationalises existing additions; enhances visual coherence.	✓
Core Strategy CP3	Appropriate scale, materials, and character; protect amenity.	Modest and subservient extensions; no adverse impacts.	✓
Core Strategy CP7	Protect biodiversity.	Works within curtilage; no habitat loss. Householder exemption applies.	✓
MDD Policy CC09	Development must be safe for its lifetime and not increase flood risk.	Works on raised ground; existing mitigation retained.	✓
MDD Policy CC10	Manage surface water at source; prevent increased runoff.	Existing soakaway and pump maintained.	✓
Borough Design Guide SPD	Contextual design; maintain amenity.	Rear elevation rationalised and improved.	✓
Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal (2017)	Preserve/enhance local character.	Rear-only works; improved materials and balance.	✓
NPPF Section 16	Preserve heritage significance.	Removes unsympathetic additions; improves architectural unity.	✓

Appendix B: Biodiversity Gain Condition – Exemption Statement

Under Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, permissions normally require a 10% biodiversity net gain. However, Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015) defines householder applications as exempt.

Applicant's Statement:

The applicant confirms that this is a *householder application* as defined by Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Accordingly, the biodiversity gain condition under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 does not apply, and a biodiversity statement is not required.